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In brief, religion covers man's relation to the entirety of existence. The characteristic feature of religion is conviction, and its contents a world conception which serves for the regulation of conduct.

This definition of religion is as broad as it sweeping; it covers not only the theistic faith, but also the atheistic religions, such as Buddhism and Confucianism, and also all philosophies, for religion is the philosophy of historical movements, while a philosophy is the religion of an individual thinker. Our definition includes all serious convictions, even those which pride themselves on being irreligious. Irreligion, according to our definition would alone that man be who had no rule of conduct, no maxim according to which he could regulate his life, and thus the irreligious man would practically be identical with the thoughtless man, the man without convictions, without principles, who lives only for the present moment, who never thinks of the future or the past and who, animal-like, only satisfies the immediate impulses of his instincts.

By offering this comparatively simple definition of religion we do not mean to describe all the awe and reverence which the religious man cherishes for his God, for the authority of his conduct, for his ideals. That is indescribable, as much so as any reality in its peculiar idiosyncracy defies definition, but our definition, it is to be hoped, will prove sufficient for scientific purposes, as a satisfactory generalisation of all religious phenomena.

P. C.

THE BASLE CONGRESS FOR THE HISTORY OF RELIGION.

The Parliament of Religions which was convened at Chicago in 1893 could not be repeated in Paris because in France the principle of a separation of church and state is interpreted in such a way as to allow the official authorities to do nothing whatever in the line of religion. Accordingly a religious parliament of any character could not have been tolerated on the Exhibition grounds at Paris; but scientific congresses were quite in order, and so there was no opposition to a historical treatment of religion. Accordingly those who advocated a religious parliament proposed to have the next best possible, which was a congress of scholars who represented not churches or congregations but a scientific inquiry into the history of religion. Thus it came about that a congress for the history of religion was held at the Paris Exposition.

The first Congress of the History of Religion was opened by

the venerable theologian, Professor Albert Réville and was conducted mainly by his well known son of equal scholarly repute, Professor Jean Réville of Paris, ably assisted by Professor Leon Marillier, a most congenial man who, I regret to add, together with his whole family two years later met with a tragic death in the waves of the sea off the coast of Bretagne. A report of the plans of the Paris Congress has been published in the May number of *The Open Court*, 1890 (pp. 271-275). Before the conclusion of the meetings the delegates organized themselves into a permanent body which would meet every four years in some convenient city of Europe, and it was then decided that the second meeting should be held at Basle.

This Basle congress was opened by its new president, Professor von Orelli, on Tuesday, August 30th of the current year, and we propose here to publish a condensed report of the lectures of those scholars who addressed the congress in plenary sessions.

Professor Von Orelli insisted that the congress was not a religious gathering. Its object was neither the propaganda of any confession of faith nor an alliance between different religions against irreligion, and least of all the establishment of a new religion of mankind. Its purpose was not even an inquisition into the divine power which governs the fate of man but simply and solely of the response which this power finds in the human heart. Representatives of different opinions would certainly learn to understand one another better and would by personal contact and mutual exchange of thought be prevented from arriving at wrong conclusions; but the congress itself stood on a neutral basis. Any serious scholar could take part in it, even the man who regarded religion as a pathological phenomenon. Yet after all, Professor Orelli concluded, our practical religious life would be benefitted by the congress for while on the one hand only he who himself is imbued with religious sentiment can correctly interpret the parts of religious phenomena, it is on the other hand to be expected that a knowledge of other religions could only serve to intensify our own religious convictions.

Professor Naville of Geneva greeted the members of the Congress in the name of the Swiss government. Dr. Burckhardt-Finsler, rector of the University of Basle, extended a cordial welcome to the Congress in the name of the City of Basle, and the venerable Professor Albert Réville of Paris spoke in the name of the French Ministry of Education. Among the visitors may be mentioned: Professor Holtzmann, of Strassburg; Professor Paul Haupt, of Baltimore; Professor Richard Garbe, of Tübingen, Professor Von Schröder, of Vienna; Dr. Mahler, of Budapest; Dr. Linaker, of Florence; Dr. Balfour, of Oxford; and M. Bonet-Maury of Paris.

Professor Albert Dietrich of Heidelberg read an essay on the "Religion of Mother Earth," showing how the Romans knew the divinity Levana, a name of Mother Earth, which is explained to signify the goddess who at the birth of the child lifts it up from the ground and hands it over to the powers of life. In connection with this religious belief the speaker mentioned the ritual of burying the bodies of dead children, which is done even among those nations who habitually burned their dead, the idea being that corpses of infants ought to be returned to Mother Earth so as to enable her to form new souls from the material. The same views concerning Mother Earth obtained in Greece and the horror of the people that their bodies might not be properly buried seems to suggest the fear that possibly they could thus be deprived of the chance of returning to life in future reincarnations. Even in our days suicides are refused burial in religious cemeteries. The veneration of Mother Earth seems to have been gradually superseded by the worship of male deities, when after the matriarchial period a change in the significance of the sexes deprived woman of her ancient prerogatives.

Professor Deussen of Kiel spoke of the kinship of Indian religions, Brahmanism and Buddhism with Christianity. All three are centered in the idea of salvation or redemption; Brahmanism preaches redemption from error through the recognition that the world is illusion; Buddhism seeks redemption from suffering by the suppression of desire; and Christianity is a redemption from sin through regeneration and a renewal of the will. Brahmanism attempts to reform thought; Buddhism, sentiment; and Christianity, the will. Considering the fact that man is at once, thinking, feeling, and willing, the three religions are complementary to each other. Professor Deussen specified further some detailed similarities between Buddhism and Christianity.

Professor Jean Réville of Paris discussed the general significance of the history of religion in its relation to the history of the church. The history of religion is not an enemy to the history of the church nor is there any competition between the two. On the contrary they are of mutual assistance and the history of the Bible cannot be understood without a knowledge of those religions which have influenced its formation. The writings of the New Testament cannot be understood without a knowledge of Judaism and Alexandrian philosophy, while the rise of Christian dogma and ecclesiastical hierarchy must remain obscure without sufficient information concerning the influence which pagan religions exercised upon the growing church. Paganism did by no means cease at the moment when

Christianity became victorious. Its influence continued to be felt during the Middle Ages in folklore and in ceremonies as well as in sectarian movements. From this standpoint the change of Oriental Christianity to Islam becomes quite comprehensive. The Renaissance and Reformation show again influences of paganism upon Christianity, nor can we predict that never again other religions will exercise an influence upon Christianity. Thus a familiarity with the general history of religion is indispensable to the theologian and, in connection with a study of religious psychology, it will afford us a better insight into the nature of religion and the religious spirit that animates mankind.

At the conclusion of the first session Rev. Weber of Menziken, in the Aargau, Swithzerland, exhibited a number of religious objects from Thibet and declared that the Lamas of Thibet and the Thibetan monasteries should not be considered as the preservers of Buddhist orthodoxy for, on the contrary, Lamanism is a degeneration of the original Buddhism. Instead of practising a religion in the sense of Buddha the Thibetans externalized his doctrines, using prayer-mills and prayer-flags, and instead of seeking Nirvana, "the extinction of all sin," by means of self-abnegation and a purification of the heart, the majority of the people attempt to reach their aim on the short cut of magical incantations. The speaker further dwelt on some superstitions of the Thibetans which will remind one of Jewish ceremonies, viz., the scape-goat, and the besmearing of the door-posts with blood; and also of Roman Catholic institutions such as masses for the dead, processions, the eternal light, holy water, etc., which as Rev. Weber said might have reached Thibet by the way of Russia, but which (as we may be permitted to add parenthetically) appear to have been introduced by the Nestorians.

A Japanese gentleman, Kaikioku Watanabé, Professor of the Buddhist College, Endiodotin, Tokyo, spoke of religion in Japan. He said that the Japanese were distinguished by great toleration which was eminently sown in their present friendly attitude toward Christianity. Buddhism in Siam, Burma, Corea, and China has become stagnant and does no longer show its missionary spirit. In Japan, however, things are different. Mr. Watanabé compared Christianity to flowing water, the Buddhism of Siam, Burma, Corea, and China, to the rigid stone of the Buddha images, but the Buddhism of Japan to a spreading tree, and he said, that this spreading tree utilised without hesitation the Christian waters that could give nourishment to its roots. Christianity had come to Japan in 1548 through the Jesuits and had been for a time very successful until

the Jesuits destroyed their own influence through their interference with politics. Japan enjoys religious liberty in the widest sense of the word. Shintoism, the old national religion, can scarcely be regarded as a religion, for it is simply a ceremonial which is still used for festive occasions. Confucianism is important as an ethical system, Taoism as a kind of nature-philosophy, for fortunately in Japan, the superstitious Taoism of China has not taken roots. There are a number of smaller religious societies such as the Tenri and the Remmon, which entertain belief in superstitious and degenerate doctrines but they exercise no influence upon the country as a whole. All the sects of Buddhism, which are altogether twelve, belong to the Mahayana Church. There are 300,000 Christians in Japan, among which the Roman and Greek Catholics are numerically the strongest. The Protestants are divided into Methodists, Baptists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc. Professor Watanabé concluded that formerly Christianity was considered as an enemy by the Buddhists but of late the representatives of both great faiths have begun to meet on friendly terms and there are symptoms of a mutual approach on both sides. Buddhists do not hesitate to accept some Christian ideas while vice versa, Christians become assimilated to the old faith of the country by adopting much that is Buddhistic.

Professor Von Schröder of Vienna spoke of the belief in a highest and good Being among the Aryans which he assumes to be one of the most primitive notions. He sees remnants of it in the belief of Diaus-Pitar, i. e., Jupiter, the heavenly father, and he thinks that it found a noble expression in the Zoroastrian belief in Ahura Mazda.

Professor Furrer of Zurich spoke of the significance of the history of religion for theology, but he insisted that the investigator should do his work with good intentions. He should endeavor to understand the meaning of other religions and should not mark only those features that are offensive. On the contrary he should point out the attractive features of other faiths and should above all beware of drawing consequences which are not positively drawn by the authorised representatives of that faith themselves, for we must bear in mind that some religions are not consistent. "A theologian," Professor Furrer declared, "cannot sustain the claim of the universality of Christianity unless he is familiar with other religions. We must grant that the conceptions of the fatherhood of God and the ordeals of a high and elevating morality are also met with in other religions. The greatness of Christianity," he added, "lies in the personality of Jesus Christ, for it was Jesus Christ only

who deepened the meaning of God as Father, who liberated man from the horrors of suffering and death, and ransomed him from sin. Jesus has made life worth living again."

M. Guimet, Director of the Musée Guimet in Paris, spoke of Lao Tze, the old philosopher of China, and defended the theory that Lao Tze should be explained from Indian Brahmanism. The Chinese language, however, lacked the finer structures that reproduce the results of Indian speculation. Nevertheless, Lao Tze's philosophy introduced not only moral reform but prepared the way also for Buddhism, another religious theory that came from India.

Rastamji Edulji Dustoor Peshotan Sanjana, Deputy High Priest of the Parsees, Bombay, read a lecture on Ahura Mazda in the Avesta, pointing out the strictly monotheistic character of Zoroastrianism and rejected the wrong notions of dualism and nature worship. Ahura Mazda is worshipped as the first cause of all things, as the immaterial creator of the material creation and he is characterised by the attributes of immutability, omnipresence, omniscience, and above all, justice. The four elements: air, fire, water, and earth, are not worshipped but are only regarded as glorifying Ahura Mazda's wisdom.

Thursday, the 1st of September, had been reserved to the inspection of a hagiographical exposition, while the evening was devoted to an excursion to Flühen.

On Friday, Dr. Paul Sarasin spoke about the religious notions of the lowest human races, which in his opinion are certain dwarf negritos in the interior of Africa, in both East Indias, in Ceylon and on the Sunda Islands. They are lower than any other people in the world both as to their bodily development and their spiritual capacities. They continue to live in the simplest way, although they are surrounded by people who possess a higher civilisation. Sarasin divided these races into two species: those with wooly hair and those with curly hair. They seem to have existed in Europe and South America.

Dr. Sarasin had studied especially the Weddas in the interior of Ceylon, and the Toallas in the interior of Celebes. The Weddas are the lowest of all. They have no herds and live exclusively of the spoils of hunting, and of roots and fruits gathered in the forest. Every family has its own hunting revier and they remind one very much of animals. Indeed, the Singalese whose civilisation has very little influenced their habits, call them with the Singalese word which means "animals." They have adopted the Singalese language but are unable to count. Their receptivity as well as their productivity

is almost *nil*. Their morality is primitive but not vulgar. It is simply an absence of a higher development. They have no avarice. They do not lay up treasures. They are content with whatever they have. Stealing and lying is unknown to them. They are grateful, courageous and patient in suffering. It is interesting to learn that they are strict monogamists and although the connubial relation which is entered into with perfect freedom by both parties is never concluded under any formality or impressive ceremony, both mates are faithful to one another throughout life. It is perhaps characteristic that jealousy is strongly developed. In answer to the question whether these nations exhibited any typical religious notions Dr. Sarasin replied in the negative. There is no trace of any worship of a higher being. They show no interest in Buddhist doctrines and simply declare that they no nothing of Buddha. They give no thought to the idea of life after death. They are satisfied with their present existence. Isolated vestiges of religious ceremonies take place at the tomb of the dead, consisting of a dance around an arrow stuck in the ground, which suggests their belief in a soul, but it seems to be unconscious and the Weddas themselves are unable to explain anything of their ritual, for they simply say that they learned it from their parents. The Toallas of Celebes are similar but not quite primitive. They are just beginning to cultivate the soil but, like the Weddas, they are strict monogamists and show no interest in religion. They have adopted nothing of the Mahomedans that live in their neighborhood. There are traces of tree worship among them, but the priest who attends to the ceremony can give no explanation why he does so. These tribes, Dr. Sarasin declared, are the most primitive of all mankind but they are not incapable of civilisation.

Rev. Dr. Jeremias of Leipsic discussed the monotheistic tendencies of the ancient Babylonians. He granted that such tendencies existed but these ideas had not become the common property of the nation, for the official polytheistic worship continued in spite of it. Things were different in Israel where a higher conception of God prevailed among the people at large. Moreover Babylonian monotheism rests upon the scientific progress of purely mundane scholarship, while the monotheism of Israel is based on the historical revelation of God himself.

Professor Kessler of Greifswald read a paper on the religion of Mani, commonly called Manicheism. Formerly our historians thought that they had to deal with a Christian sect, but now we know that Manicheism was a great world religion which had not

only spread to the Occident (for instance St. Augustine was a Manichian for some time during his youth), where it continued down into the Middle Ages, but prevailed also in the East and even in China, yea—in Manchuria. So far Manicheism was known only through the opposition of its adversaries, but in 1902 Professor Grünwedel discovered in Turkestan several great fragments of an unknown script which by Prof. Müller of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin were deciphered and explained as Manichean writings in the Middle Persian language. These fragments which are not yet published, corroborate the reliability of the information we have from Arabian historians concerning Manicheism.

Dr. Kohlback of Kaposvar spoke of the mutual influences of religion on art, and of art on religion.

Professor Paul Haupt proposed a reconstruction of Ecclesiastes, insisting that the main idea of the book exhibited a sceptical pessimism.

Professor Samuel Ives Curtiss of Chicago could not be present because he was suffering on his return from Syria from a sudden collapse and lay sick in Zürich. His paper on "Primitive Semitic Religion Today" was read by a friend and greatly appreciated by the audience. We regret to state that Professor Curtiss died very soon after the Congress in Zürich, and his death is the more to be lamented as he had collected much interesting material on his journey through the Orient. We have published an article, explaining the results of his former work in the July number of *The Open Court* (1904, pp. 121ff.), entitled "The Religion of Proto-Semitism," and we had an almost buoyant letter from him, dated September 19th, in which he expressed his confidence of a speedy recovery. He further mentioned the results of his explorations in the Orient, and his hope of having them published in a strict scientific form by the Carnegie Institute and also in a popular book which would render them accessible to the general public. On September 22, Professor Curtiss suffered from a sudden relapse and died unexpectedly.

We believe that his investigations throw a new light upon the development of religion, especially the religion of the Semites, and it is to be hoped that his papers are in such a condition as to enable the Carnegie Institute to publish them without difficulty.

THE FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS AT ROME.

The Freethinkers of Europe had planned to hold at Rome, the seat of ultra-Montanism and the stronghold of all reactionary move-